

# REQUIRED CORE COMPETENCIES

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To assist Designated Virginia Main Street communities in the incremental and comprehensive development of an active downtown revitalization program, Virginia Main Street has developed the following list of core competencies. While individual projects and activities are unique to the community, there are some general tasks and types of projects Virginia Main Street has found to be vital to the progressive growth of a Main Street program and organization, benefitting the vitality and growth of the historic commercial district and greater community. These competencies are meant to be a base level of activity, and communities should strive to undertake more challenging projects as they build capacity.

Steady progress in meeting core competencies must occur during the first three to five years of the organization's Main Street designation in order for specialist services to continue. Core competencies must be in place in order for a community to progress to Accredited Main Street designation. Progress in meeting the core competencies will be assessed during the annual Year-End Evaluations.

The core competencies are listed below and categorized according to the Main Street Approach. In order to build a strong foundation for the program, a very active Organization Committee (often the Board of Directors) is required to work on the numerous projects listed under this category. Although there are many important organizational tasks, it is necessary to remember that the Main Street Four Points are comprehensive. Activities in the areas of Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, as well as Organization, are essential for an action-oriented program that achieves successful, on-going revitalization of the historic central business district.

Broad community engagement cultivates the partnerships strategic to the implementation of a successful Main Street program. By securing support for the collaborative Main Street vision, local economic impact becomes evident in tangible, quantifiable outcomes that better demonstrate the local story to funders and key stakeholders. The Main Street Approach consists of three tightly-integrated components:

1. Identifying community vision and understanding the local market (Inputs)
2. Implementing transformation strategies through the Four Point framework
3. Impact and measurement, monitoring quantitative and qualitative outcomes (Outputs)

Core competencies often build upon each other and are often related to competencies in other categories. While each community will complete the core competencies in their own time frame within the three to five year window, it is recommended that they be completed in the general sequence in which they are listed.



## ECONOMIC VITALITY

This element of the Main Street Four Points concentrates on strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand its economy and introduce compatible new uses. This work is rooted in a commitment to making the most of a community's unique sense of place and existing historic assets, harnessing local economic opportunity and creating a supportive business environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The Economic Vitality Committee and project teams have the job of identifying new market opportunities for the traditional commercial district, finding new uses for historic commercial buildings and stimulating investment in property. To succeed, this committee must develop a thorough understanding of the community's economic condition and opportunities for incremental market growth. Specifically:

- ⇒ Build entrepreneurial economies;
- ⇒ Strengthen existing businesses and recruiting new ones;
- ⇒ Find new economic uses for traditional Main Street buildings;
- ⇒ Develop financial incentives and capital for business development and retail operations layout;
- ⇒ Monitor the economic performance of the district.

### ECONOMIC VITALITY CORE COMPETENCIES

#### **Basic**

- ✓ Complete and maintain building inventory for the downtown including:
  - Rental rates
  - Square footage
  - Age of building
  - Unique features
  - Condition
  - Ownership
  - Vacancy
  - Taxes
  - Current photograph
- ✓ Complete and maintain a business inventory for the downtown including:
  - Cumulative number of businesses
  - Ownership
  - Product / Service
  - Customers
  - Amount of sales
  - Sales patterns
  - Lease conditions
  - Availability (date / price)
- ✓ Track program impact, including:
  - Changes in sales tax revenue
  - Changes in property tax revenue
  - Net new jobs
  - Net new businesses
  - Amount of private investment
  - Number of volunteer hours
- ✓ Create a new business owners' orientation kit. Develop a network of entrepreneur development partners to assist new entrepreneurs and existing businesses (micro-enterprise development organizations, SBDC, SCORE, EDA, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)

## **Intermediate**

- ✓ Complete market analysis including:
  - Surveys
  - Sales leakage assessment
  - Business recruitment plan
  - Business retention plan
  - Summary report
- ✓ Develop a downtown development vision and strategy
  - Identify target niche markets
  - Develop a downtown clustering/leasing plan/strategy
- ✓ Develop and market economic development incentives, including
  - Business seminars
  - Loan pool programs
  - Grant programs
- ✓ Develop a small, local business recruitment packet and procedures
- ✓ Develop business retention programs

## **Advanced**

- ✓ Expand organization's role to develop or be a partner in the development of property in downtown (act like CDC).
- ✓ Expand organization's role to provide micro-business development services, including micro-financing, credit building, etc.
- ✓ Create new financial capital.
- ✓ Support local community banks (banks that are locally owned and rooted in a particular community), credit unions, and community development financial institutions (CDFI).
- ✓ Start a Move Your Money Campaign to get local residents to move their deposits to a local community bank or credit union or to invest in a local CDFI.
- ✓ Tap the power of local banks for local investment and work with financial institutions to create additional lending platforms (e.g. linking local deposits with local loans).
- ✓ Develop community owned and supported businesses.
- ✓ Start a Local Investment Opportunity Network (LION) or other local angel investor "club."
- ✓ Find ways to incorporate crowdfunding (e.g., Kickstarter.com, Indiegogo.com, Fundrise.com) into new business development
- ✓ Slow Money
- ✓ Cooperatives
- ✓ Unaccredited investing



## DESIGN

This element of the Main Street Four Points focuses on improving the physical environment by renovating buildings, constructing compatible new buildings, improving signs and merchandise displays, creating attractive and usable public spaces and ensuring that planning and zoning regulations support Main Street revitalization.

The Design Committee and its project teams play a key role in shaping the physical image of Main Street as a place attractive to shoppers, investors, business owners and visitors. To succeed this committee must persuade business owners, building owners and civic leaders to adopt a specific approach for physical improvements to buildings, businesses and public improvements. Specifically:

- ⇒ Educate others about good design by enhancing the image of each business as well as that of the district;
- ⇒ Provide good design advice by encouraging quality improvements to private properties and public spaces;
- ⇒ Plan Main Street's development by guiding future growth and shaping regulations;
- ⇒ Motivate others to make changes by creating incentives and targeting key projects.

### DESIGN CORE COMPETENCIES

#### **Basic**

- ✓ Develop and market improvement incentives and assistance including:
  - Working with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to list the downtown district on the National Register of Historic Places and/or the Virginia Landmarks Register
  - Design guidelines – develop a design guidelines publication *Keeping up Appearances*
  - Design Assistance – through Virginia Main Street Architect
- ✓ Evaluate existing physical assets – buildings, streets, public signs, parking lots and open spaces
- ✓ Inventory conditions of physical environment
- ✓ Façade improvements

#### **Intermediate**

- ✓ Develop and market improvement incentives and assistance including:
  - Loan programs
  - Grant programs
  - Design Assistance – through Virginia Main Street
- ✓ Explore a formalized design review process with custom design guidelines
- ✓ Develop district identification signs
- ✓ Create a detailed and visually appealing map of downtown
- ✓ Photograph downtown extensively; including before, during and after photos of rehabilitation work and promotional events; Streetscape improvements
- ✓ Mid-size rehabilitation projects

#### **Advanced**

- ✓ Conduct a traffic study
- ✓ Conduct a parking study (if appropriate)
- ✓ Continue façade improvements
- ✓ Large rehabilitation projects
- ✓ New development



## PROMOTION

This element of the Main Street Four Points deals with marketing the district's assets to residents, visitors, investors and others through special events, retail promotion and activities that improve the way the district is perceived.

Promoting Main Street takes many forms, but the ultimate goal is to position the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and the hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics. To be effective this committee must move beyond cookie-cutter downtown promotion ideas. Specifically:

- ⇒ Understand the changing market - identifying both potential shoppers and the competition;
- ⇒ Identify downtown assets - including people, buildings, heritage and institutions;
- ⇒ Define Main Street's market niche - its unique position in the marketplace;
- ⇒ Create new image campaigns, retail promotions and special events - to bring people back to downtown.

### **PROMOTION CORE COMPETENCIES**

- ✓ Develop, approve and publish a balanced annual calendar of promotional events that includes a mix of special events, retail and image events.
- ✓ Evaluate promotional events - including information on number of attendees and impact in reaching program goals
- ✓ Develop a media resource list
- ✓ Conduct outreach / media relations activities including:
  - Press releases
  - Print media columns
  - Press liaison
  - Feature articles
  - Radio/TV talk shows
- ✓ Create a downtown business directory
- ✓ Initiate and complete at least one special event
- ✓ Initiate and complete at least one retail event
- ✓ Conduct downtown image development activities including:
  - Identify downtown's assets
  - Compile information about the marketplace
  - Analyze data
  - Match assets with market niches
  - Write a positioning statement
  - Conduct Image advertising (Examples: newspaper, radio, TV, direct mail ads)
  - Develop collateral materials (Examples: entrance signs, banner, shopping bags, buttons, Tee-shirts w/ logo)
  - Develop media relations (Examples: media kits, press releases, press receptions for major projects, TV, radio and newspaper interviews)
  - Develop image-building events (Examples: downtown progress awards ceremonies, ribbon-cutting for new projects, "before and after" renovation displays)



## ORGANIZATION

A strong organizational foundation is crucial for a sustainable Main Street revitalization effort. This element of the Main Street Four Points focuses on building collaboration among a broad range of public and private sector groups, organizations and constituencies.

The Organization Committee and its project teams play a key role in keeping the board, committees and staff functioning by attracting people and money to the Main Street Program. To succeed, this committee must take responsibility for managing these financial and logistical aspects of the non-profit organization:

- ⇒ Raise money - for projects and administration, from donations and sponsorships;
- ⇒ Oversee volunteer activities- recruit and supervise people, and reward good work;
- ⇒ Promote the program - to downtown interests and the public;
- ⇒ Manage finances - develop good accounting procedures.

### ORGANIZATION CORE COMPETENCIES

The activities listed below are grouped by *basic*, *intermediate* and *advanced*. In general, projects grouped in the basic category should be completed before the organization moves onto intermediate activities. Intermediate activities should be completed before tackling advanced projects. This progression will serve to build a strong foundation upon which the organization can build a long-term, successful program.

#### **Basic**

- ✓ Develop an organizational structure, Articles of Incorporation and By-laws
- ✓ Formulate accounting systems (It is suggested that all programs have an annual audit by a CPA)
- ✓ Bookkeeping system
- ✓ Payroll/employee number
- ✓ Bank/charge accounts
- ✓ Hire a Program Director
- ✓ Set up Main Street office including:
  - Permanent Location
  - Equipment
  - Furnishings
- ✓ Registrations: state, county, city
- ✓ Develop a clear, shared mission and write it as a mission statement
- ✓ Hold annual work planning sessions
- ✓ Develop a written work plan
  - Achieve Board approval
  - Send to VMS
- ✓ Form committees and hold regular meetings

#### **Intermediate**

- ✓ Develop an organization logo (letterhead, etc.)
- ✓ Develop 501(c)(3) non-profit application to Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- ✓ Develop an annual budget
  - Achieve Board approval
  - Send to VMS
- ✓ Initiate an annual, signed agreement with local government
- ✓ Create and regularly update job descriptions for both staff and volunteers

- ✓ Compile and send Board of Directors list, including contact information and mini-resume for each Officer and Director

### **Advanced**

- ✓ Develop a five-year fundraising plan including:
  - Sustainable and diverse income base
  - List of private contributors
  - At least one fundraising event
  - Produce an informational brochure about the organization
  - Develop various methods for communicating with donors throughout the year
- ✓ Create a mailing list for the organization including:
  - Downtown business owners
  - Downtown property owners
  - Local interest groups
  - Officials
  - Supporters
- ✓ Develop a communications strategy
  - Website
  - Social media
  - Downtown map with business and attractions directory
  - Print and broadcast media resources
  - Downtown brochure
- ✓ Build a volunteer database
  - Develop and maintain a method for documenting volunteer hours and skill sets
  - Develop and maintain a Volunteer Participation waiver